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DE RUEHDBU #0252/01 0461352  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 151352Z FEB 07  
FM AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9637  
INFO RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI 0028  
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI 0060  
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 1250  
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DUSHANBE 000252

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DEPT FOR INL/AAA BUHLER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KWMN](#) [SNAR](#) [IOM](#) [TI](#)

SUBJECT: VISIT TO DUSHANBE TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS SHELTER

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11. (U) SUMMARY: On February 14, 2007, International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Officer visited the INL-funded and International Organization for Migration (IOM)-administered Trafficking in Persons Shelter located in Dushanbe. This was an unannounced visit following up a previous visit on 18 January by foreign service national staff. The shelter Director and employees provided free access to the facility. The shelter was well-equipped with ample food, medicine and supplies, and the staff appeared competent and professional. END SUMMARY

12. (U) International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Officer met with the new Trafficking in Persons shelter director Muhabbat Pirnazarova who apparently also serves as the International Organization for Migration program manager for the Trafficking in Persons program. EmbOff advised Pirnazarova that the Embassy expects the shelter to develop into a fully independent, self-sustaining organization, and that International Organization for Migration personnel should not run the shelter directly. EmbOff followed up with International Organization for Migration country director regarding this management issue, and he agreed that Pirnazarova must be assigned as a full time employee of the shelter. The previous director, Ibodad Mirzoeva, was fired by International Organization for Migration in November 2006 following a series of cross-accusations between her and International Organization for Migration staff. During this visit two shelter staff explained that Mirzoeva was using the office and equipment for her personal business interests and had cut a deal with a cotton manufacturer to supply women from the shelter as laborers. (NOTE: Neither International Organization for Migration nor the Embassy have evidence that this was actually the case. END NOTE)

13. (U) At the time of the visit, there were three women in the shelter, all between the ages of 24 and 30. One of the women was in a sewing class with a local teacher hired by the facility. The Director stated she was looking for a reputable massage therapist to provide instruction to one of the girls who is interested in getting a license in massage therapy. She also reported that a chemistry and biology teacher is currently conducting a tutorial for two women who are hoping to take the entrance exam for Dushanbe Medical College for Nursing. During a brief discussion with these women, they reported that they were comfortable and relieved to be back in Tajikistan after being repatriated from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. One of them mentioned that she missed her family who live in Kulob, but was afraid to contact them. The Director stated that she is

encouraging the woman to call her family and has offered to act as go-between if needed.

¶4. (U) Other staff at the Shelter at the time of the visit included a female physician and female psychiatrist. Both reported that the victims were in relatively good health (slight malnutrition). The psychiatrist noted that most of the victims who have passed through the shelter over the last few months had clearly experienced serious trauma, but that their short stays at the shelter did not provide enough time to address their emotional issues. The director stated that a night nurse is present at the shelter Monday through Friday and that another had been hired to work nights on Saturday and Sunday.

¶5. (U) Upon inspection, the facility appeared clean and orderly. The library had several shelves of used books including instruction manuals, Persian literature, math and science books and romance novels. The medical unit was well stocked with medicine and first aid supplies. The kitchen, where victims cook their own meals, was stocked with staples and sundries including bread, milk, vegetables and chicken in the refrigerator. The Director noted that a former guest of the shelter had taken advantage of the industrial-sized oven to learn to bake as a possible way to make money.

¶6. (U) Considering that this was an unannounced visit, Embassy is impressed that the shelter was clean, organized, fully staffed and equipped, and was supporting multiple victims who noted that they feel safe at the shelter. The Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement funded this project almost a year ago and the shelter officially opened in April 2006. Since then, it has supported over 50 trafficked persons who were repatriated as a result of the Government of

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Tajikistan and International Organization for Migration efforts with destination countries such as the United Arab Emirates. INL has funding to support the shelter for another year using FY-2007 funds. The U.S. Agency for International Development is supporting a similar shelter for minors in Khujand. That funding for the Khujand shelter will run out in March 2008.  
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